



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

This week I have a tremendous opportunity to participate in the 2nd Annual Travel Leadership Summit in Washington D.C. AOT, in partnership with the Arizona Tourism Alliance, the Arizona Hotel and Lodging Association and the Arizona Restaurant and Hospitality Association, will be taking a delegation of more than 20 various members of Arizona's tourism industry to meet with our congressional delegation to help advocate on critical tourism issues. These issues include comprehensive immigration reform, travel facilitation, which includes international travel promotion and the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), transportation infrastructure funding, and the federal funding of national parks and public lands. This summit provides a great opportunity to join other state travel industry leaders from across the country to combine our efforts to make a united and organized impact on tourism legislation. Last year this group was instrumental in passing the vital WHTI legislative reform.

Also, Governor Napolitano has recently announced that Saturday, September 29, is Arizona Trail Day. The Arizona Trail is the path that stretches more than 800 miles from southern Arizona to the northern part of the state. To help celebrate the declaration, the Arizona Trail Association (ATA) will be hosting a fundraising event to encourage visitors to join them out on the Arizona Trail to hike, run, ride, or bike across more than 200 miles of the trail. Then the group will wrap things up at the Mormon Lake Lodge for a celebration dinner. Proceeds will go to the ATA to help maintain the 800 mile trail. What a great way to help commemorate this incredible tourism asset! For more information and to register for the event, please visit www.aztrail.org.

Have a great week.

Margie R. Emmenau

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

AOT Looking for Free Things to Do

AOT is looking for your free stuff to do with our visitors. Travel companies often ask us for information about free attractions or activities that can be added to Arizona itineraries and tours. These help add value to new or existing travel packages for their leisure clients traveling to the Grand Canyon State. So, AOT is seeking free activities that are cultural, historical, nature-based, etc., and may include museums, zoos, observatories, events, tours, etc. Please respond by e-mail and write **"Free Stuff"** in the subject line. Be sure to send all the particulars including the attraction, location, contact information, a short description of the activity, and any other information you think we should include. Also include special notes if it is a seasonal activity, group friendly, etc. Please send your "Free Stuff" to jsutcliffe@azot.gov by October 5, 2007.

Trippin with AOT

Arizona and WestJet Partner Once Again

AOT visited Western Canada last week to visit with key clients and travel agents. AOT and seven state tourism organizations (Chandler Tourism, Flagstaff CVB, Greater Phoenix CVB, Mesa CVB, Scottsdale CVB, Tempe CVB and Tucson CVB) partnered with WestJet to reach travel agents in Edmonton and Winnipeg. The contingency visited travel offices and held evening travel agent events to showcase Arizona product and "what's new" around the state. This is the fourth year Arizona has partnered with WestJet in Western Canada. WestJet also launched their brand new WestJet Vacations catalog, which features 12 pages of Arizona hotels and attractions for their package travel division. In addition the Arizona delegation hosted a VIP dinner in Vancouver for key clients in the area. In total, the Arizona delegation and WestJet reached more than 200 travel industry sellers. For more information or to participate in future missions, please contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at 602-364-3693 or via e-mail at jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Arizona Represented at American Indian Tourism Conference

Arizona was well represented at the 9th Annual American Indian Tourism Conference, "Building Capacity for Tourism Success." The event was September 17-19, 2007 in Cherokee, North Carolina. A delegation from AOT, the Gila River Indian Community, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Navajo Transit System, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Navajo Arts & Crafts Enterprise, Hopi Tribe and San Carlos Apache Tribe attended the event to help promote Arizona.

AOT Hosts Back to School Press Trip

AOT recently hosted a media familiarization (FAM) tour for five international travel writers, representing three countries including Germany, Austria and Scotland. The Back to School Press Trip, which took place from September 10 – 15, offered writers the opportunity to explore Arizona's diverse and culturally enriched college towns. The tour began in Flagstaff where writers experienced the natural beauty and wonder of Walnut Canyon and Sunset Crater. The discoveries continued in Tempe with Mill Avenue, Tempe Town Lake and Gammage taking center stage. Finally, the trip concluded in Tucson where the writers got to ride like cowboys at

the White Stallion Guest Ranch and eat like the locals at El Charro Mexican Café. On the Back to School Press Trip, the writers learned that there is a lot more to Arizona college towns than just the campus.

Travel Trade Workshop in Switzerland

In October 2007, AOT's German representative will attend the Travel Trade Workshop in Montreux, Switzerland. In attendance are more than 4,000 Swiss travel agents, all leading Swiss tour operators and international airlines. Arizona will have an individual booth at this year's event which is being held October 26th -27th. Brochure distribution is available at a cost of \$200 plus shipping. For more information, please contact Loretta Belonio at (602) 364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelenio@azot.gov.

Tour Operator Road Show Throughout Germany

Each year, AOT partners with a major German tour operator on their annual road show. For 2007 the tour operator is Meier's and the road show will visit the cities of Dortmund, Cologne, Frankfurt, Nuremburg and Berlin. These road shows are an excellent opportunity to highlight Arizona to a large target audience. During the week long event, more than 600 travel agents are educated about travel to Arizona. Brochure distribution is available at a cost of \$200, plus shipping. For more information, please contact Loretta Belonio at (602) 364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelenio@azot.gov.

Industry News

Canada is Giddy About the Loonie

After 31 years of playing second fiddle, the Canadian loonie, so-called because of the bird on the dollar coin, overtook the U.S. greenback last week. A nation that has long been the butt of jokes from its neighbor to the south puffed out its chest and grinned. At the start of the year, one U.S. dollar bought 1.166 Canadian dollars. Late Friday in New York, it bought just 1,0008--a slide of 14 percent. The rise is a boon for Canadians looking to buy American real estate, stocks or just about anything for sale at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn, which has seen a 15 percent uptick in the number of Canadian customers this year. But it isn't good news for Canadian hotels or tourist destinations, or exporters of everything from beer to maple syrup to lumber and wheat. The weakness of the American dollar worries some Canadian investors as well as businesses that rely on American customers. It is also not helping American tourism in Canada, where the number of visitors from the U.S. has been declining since before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The rush to cross into the U.S. is complicated by new restrictions at the border, where proof of nationality is increasingly expected and passports are set to be come mandatory as early as January. (*Pages A1, Wall Street Journal, 9/22-23; A8, New York Times, 9/22*)

Catering to Traveling Techies

The latest niche in hotel building: a new brand aimed at traveling techies. Jerry Ellenburg, founder and chairman of eSuites Hotels in Tampa, is building four new hotels in Florida, North Carolina and Arizona. "eSuites will offer desktop computers at workstations in every guest room. Each hotel also will include high-tech conference rooms, T1 bandwidth options for Internet access, and a 3,500-square-foot, glass-fronted fitness center," reports the *Business Journal of Phoenix*. "This is a national brand launch," said Mr Ellenburg, who believes the chain will grow to more than 300 properties over the next 10 years. The company is scheduled to break ground on its first four properties by December, and each property is expected to be open to guests in the third quarter of 2008. Rooms will be around \$140 to \$160 a night. Mr Ellenburg said cities under

consideration for his next round of hotels are Charlotte; Atlanta; Dallas; Texas; and Portland, Ore. *(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*

U.S. is Working on Welcome

Complaints from foreign business and leisure travelers have led the U.S. government to take steps to improve the treatment of travelers arriving in this country. In February 2006, the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security announced a program, called Secure Borders and Open Doors, aimed at balancing the increased need for security after 9/11 with the desire to ease travel to the United States. And Last February, the Homeland Security Department started the Traveler Redress Inquiry Program, or TRIP, which provides an online form travelers can use to file complaints electronically about any travel-related government entity. But while government officials say they are trying for a change, there is no way to tell if progress has been made. Former Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, who served as the first secretary of Homeland Security, is working with the Discover America Partnership to find ways to improve the entry experience. Travel industry leaders say the publicity about the poor entry experience is discouraging many foreigners from visiting the U.S. *(Page C7, New York Times)*

International Travel Bill Introduced

Representatives Sam Farr, D-Calif., and Jon Porter, R-Nev., will introduce legislation next week establishing a new grant program aimed at improving the U.S. image abroad by encouraging international travelers to visit the United States. They will be joined by several travel industry leaders who have supported the bill at a press conference Sept. 26 to introduce the legislation. The "Improving Public Diplomacy Through International Travel Act" would create a competitive matching grant program offering grants ranging from \$150,000 to \$1 million, totaling \$50 million over five years. The grants would be used for programs targeting the top five international markets for travel to the U.S. with a goal of improving U.S. diplomacy through increased travel. The program would use funds from the State Department's Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Details at 202-225-2861. *(Special to TA)*

Urbanites Prefer Tours to New Areas

Urban dwellers are more likely than their non-metro counterparts to explore a new destination with each vacation, according to a recent consumer survey conducted for the US Tour Operators Association (USTOA). Urbanites are also more likely to buy a tour or vacation package in order to see new or unfamiliar places, and to find out more about the history or culture of an area. And when shopping for a vacation, twice as many metro dwellers first choose a destination and then shop for value (40 percent vs. 20 percent non-metros), according to the survey. TNS Research conducted the telephone survey of 1,000 participants on behalf of USTOA. Vacation packages were defined as buying hotel and airfare or other arrangements together. USTOA members provide vacations for 11 million people yearly. Member of USTOA have to meet various standards, including posting \$1 million in security to protect consumers in case a company goes out of business. *(Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter)*